

BRA
738

Memorandum

To: Dick Garver
From: Alice Boelter *AB*
Date: August 28, 1979
Subject: CHINATOWN / Housing Sites

You might be interested to see the site list prepared by the Chinatown Housing and Land Development Task Force. Lou Scrina of the CACA sent me his copy.

cc: Arthur Reilly ✓
Gary Brown





CHINATOWN HOUSING PLAN (CHOP)

HOUSING FOR THE CHINATOWN COMMUNITY

The Chinatown Housing and Land Development Task Force is attempting to organize the Chinese people into recognizing their rights for adequate and low-income housing. Increasing population and institutional and commercial encroachment in the Chinatown-South Cove community have created a desperate shortage of family housing.

Much of the population growth in the last few years has been due to recent immigration of Chinese from Hong Kong, the People's Republic of China and Vietnam. Various estimates of this growth range from 300 to 450 new arrivals per year. Many of these recent arrivals are families with large numbers of children. Because of the extreme cultural difference, many of the immigrants are emotionally and physically upset by their new environment. In order to survive, adopt and communicate, Chinatown is the only community in which they find safety, community support and strength.

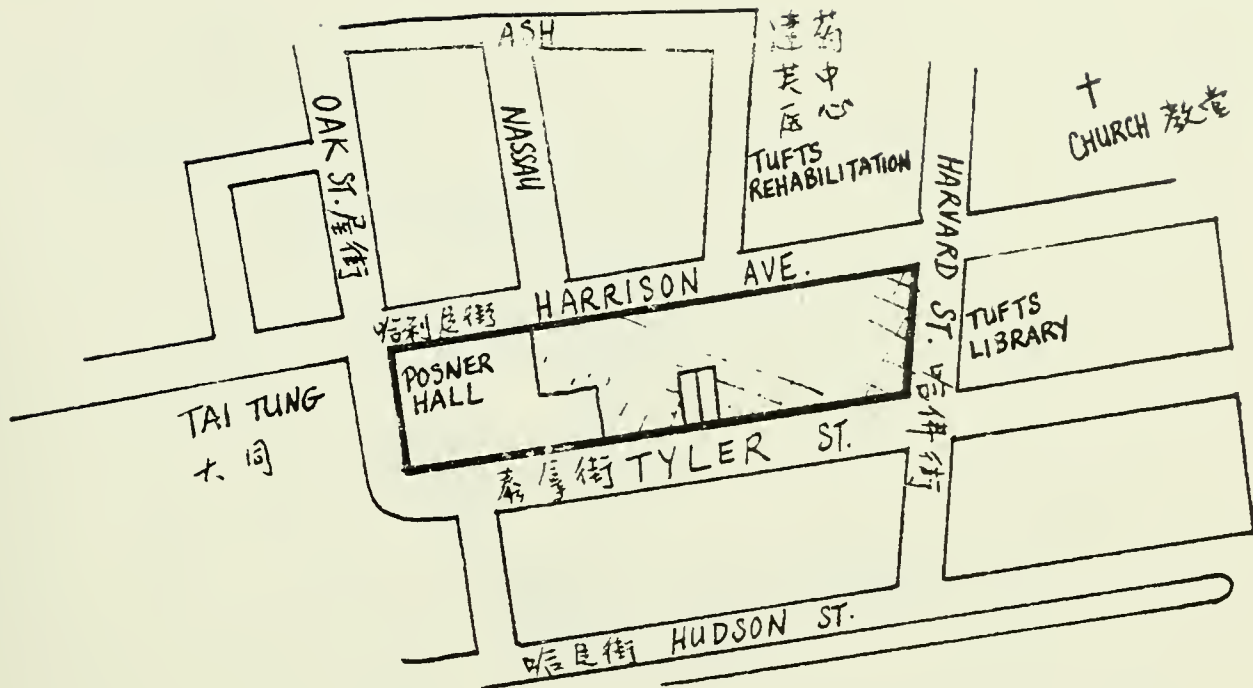
The extremely dense housing conditions presently in Chinatown have reached a crisis stage. According to the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), 78% of Chinatown's housing is overcrowded, compared to the citywide figure of only 8%. In addition, 72% of Chinatown's housing was considered to be deteriorated or dilapidated in 1969, compared to 14% for the rest of the city. The number of persons on the waiting list for the four low-income housing projects in Chinatown (Tai Tung, Mass Pike Towers, Castle Square and Quincy Tower) is estimated to be 2,100 families and individuals. Despite the desperate need for housing, the last two decades have seen Chinatown reduced substantially, with 1,200 housing units lost due to construction of the Expressway, Mass Pike Extension, and the expansion of the encroaching Tufts-New England Medical complex. Chinatown's total land has been reduced 31%, from 28.5 to 19.8 acres.

More recently, major developments on the boundaries of Chinatown have escalated the land values within Chinatown, leading to land hoarding and speculation. These include the Lafayette Place development and the South Station development to the north, the Park Plaza development to the west, the Central Artery depression of the JFK Expressway to the east, and the construction of the MBTA Orange Line to the south. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has also proposed a nutrition center to be built on Stuart Street.

Finally, Tufts-New England Medical Center has attempted to purchase yet four more buildings in Chinatown to continue their expansionist goals. The buildings at 28 Harvard Street and 135-137 Harrison Avenue at one time contained over 24 units of family and individual housing. Yet again Tufts-New England Medical Center is attempting to evict the tenants and tear down the existing housing.

The Chinatown Housing and Land Development Task Force has drawn up a plan for family housing to address the growing need for housing in Chinatown. Within this plan we are attempting to determine the feasibility of six different land sites for development. Each of these sites has great potential, although development of any land will not occur without strong support from the Chinese people. We strongly urge the Chinese community to join the Task Force in an attempt to stop Tufts-New England Medical Center and other institutions and to support the struggle for low-income family housing in Chinatown.

For more information you can write to us at: Chinatown Housing and Land Development Task Force, c/o Quincy Community School, 885 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02111; or call



SITE #1: POSNER HALL - PARKING LOT

STREET BOUNDARIES: Harrison, Oak, Tyler, Harvard

SIZE: 100,000 square feet (estimated)

OWNERS: Tufts-New England Medical Center; Boston Redevelopment Authority;
private owner

TYPE OF HOUSING PROPOSED: Family--2, 3, 4 bedroom

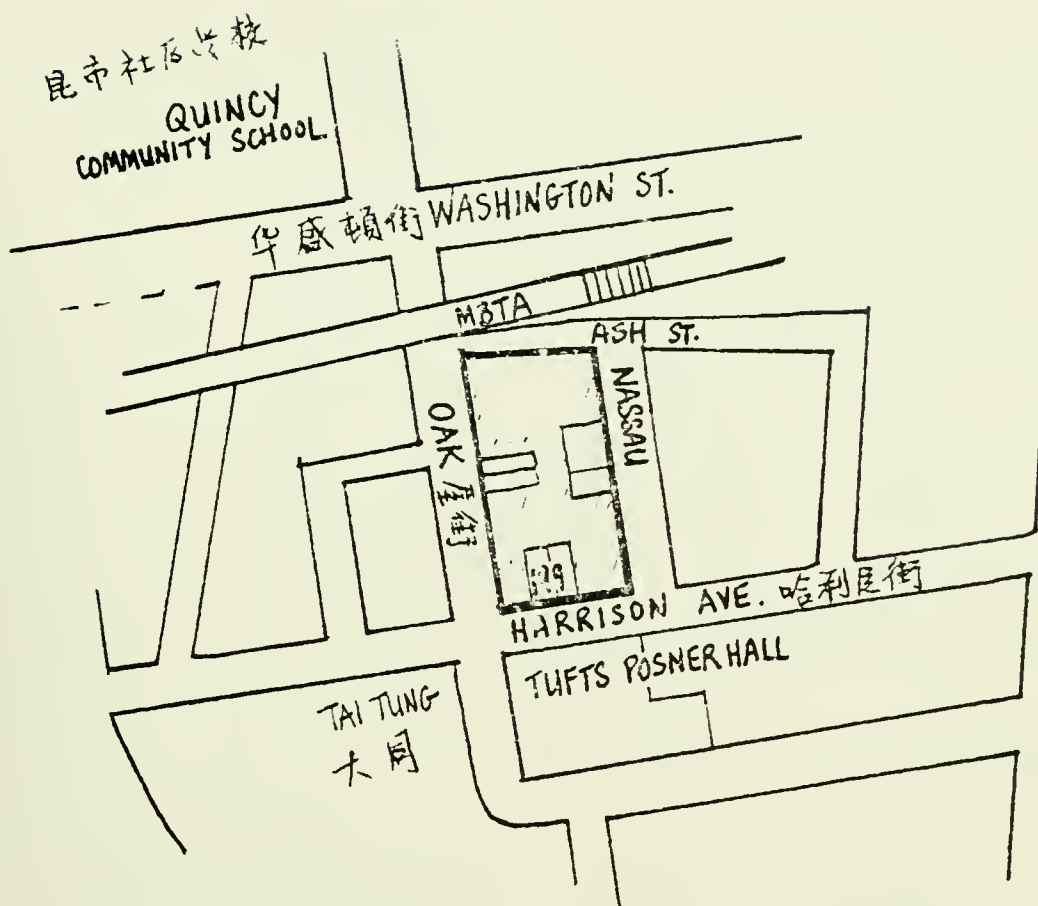
GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This rectangular site is currently occupied by Tufts' Posner Hall (a dormitory, a handicapped clinic and an auditorium). The largest portion of the site is used as a parking lot with an eastern portion containing two privately-owned housing lots with commercial use on the first floor. This site is immediately opposite (west) of Tufts-New England Medical Center's Rehabilitation Building. Its northern boundary on Harvard Street faces Tufts' Medical and Dental Library building. The eastern boundary on Tyler faces privately-owned townhouses. The southern boundary on Oak faces the 200-unit Tai Tung housing development.

The site is within a block of community services such as the Quincy Community School, YMCA, South Cove Community Health Center. It is within two blocks of the main shopping area of Chinatown. For both working men and women it is easily accessible to garment industries and to the pick-up and drop-off center (Beach Street) of restaurant workers. In addition, it lies four blocks away from Essex Station of the MBTA. Traffic is generally light with the exception of Harrison Street which has a higher level of traffic due to the hospital. The noise level is fair with the exception of emergency vehicles outside the emergency clinic of T-NEMC.

SUITABILITY

This site is the largest site available in the Chinatown area and the best suited for a large development of family housing. To reduce congestion and noise, any housing development on this site should face Tyler Street, with the back facing T-NEMC.



SITE #2: OAK-NASSAU

STREET BOUNDARIES: Oak, Nassau, Ash, Harrison

SIZE: 65,000 square feet

OWNERS: Tufts-New England Medical Center; Boston Redevelopment Authority

TYPE OF HOUSING PROPOSED: Family--2, 3, 4 bedroom

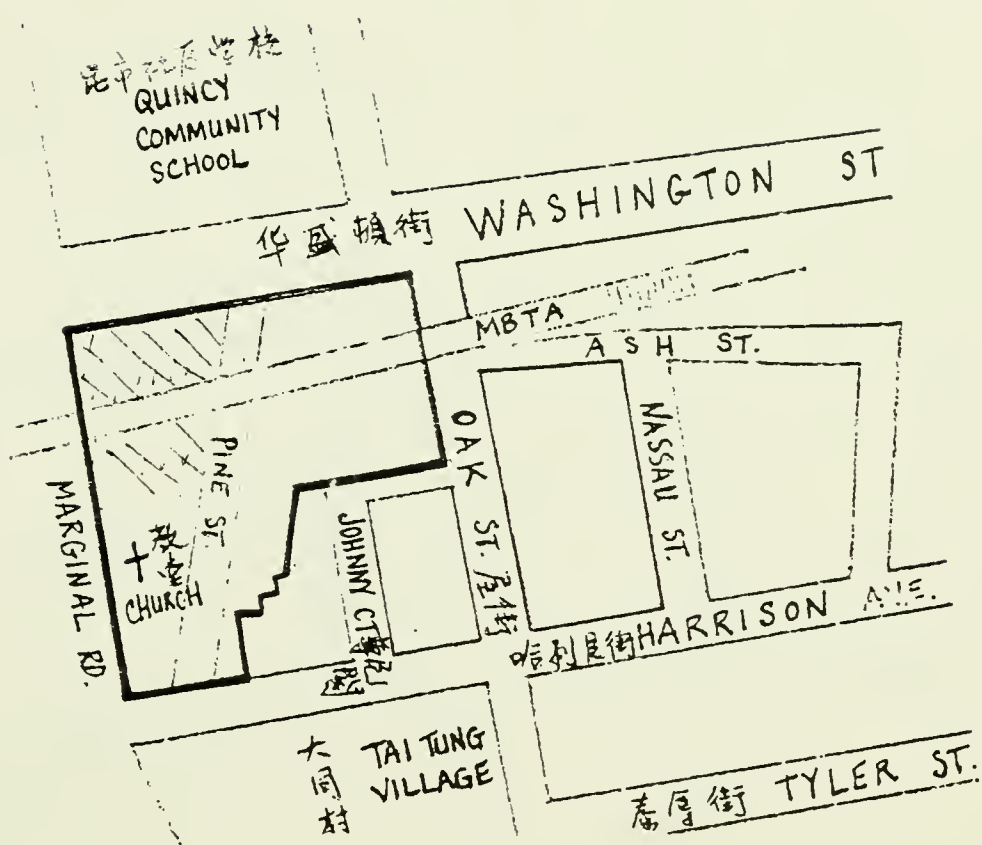
GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This large rectangular site is presently occupied by office and parking spaces owned by T-NEMC; a small portion of the parcel, 34-36 Oak Street, is used by the Quincy Community School and another portion, 199 Harrison, is used by the Boston Chinese Y.E.S. This site is immediately across from Posner Hall on Harrison, while on Oak it faces privately-owned housing.

This parcel is close to shopping, transportation and community facilities. Harrison Avenue leads to the commercial area of Chinatown as well as work sites, pick-up and drop-off points of many Chinese men and women garment and restaurant workers. The Essex MBTA station is nearby. The Quincy Community School and the South Cove Community Health Center are one block west on Oak Street.

SUITABILITY

This site is a large parcel fit for large family housing units, away from the more heavily trafficked areas of Chinatown. Although the Orange MBTA elevated line, which rises at Nassau Street, presently creates noise problems, once it is torn down the site has much potential for development.



SITE #3: PARCEL R3-R3A

STREET BOUNDARIES: Harrison, Marginal Road, Washington, Oak, Johnny Court

SIZE: R3 = 67,800 square feet; R3A = 31,300 square feet

OWNER: Boston Redevelopment Authority

TYPE OF HOUSING PROPOSED: Family--2, 3, 4 bedroom

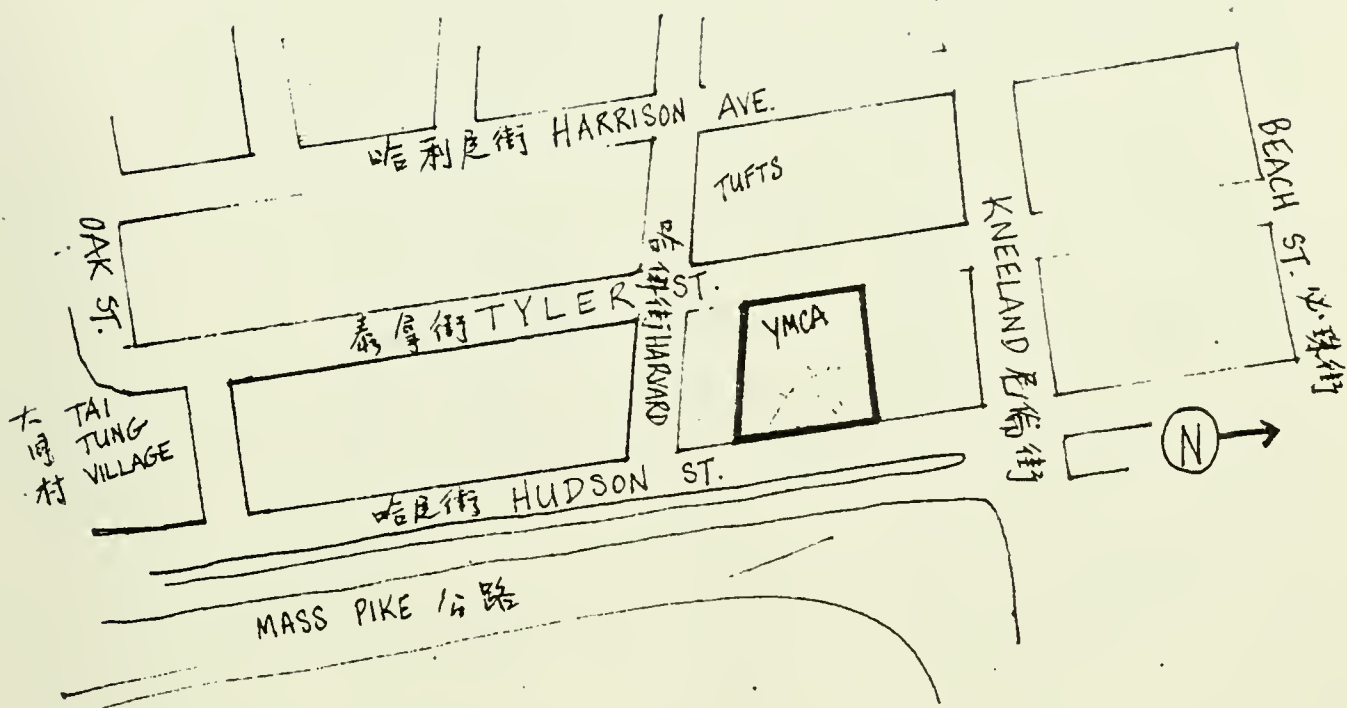
GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This is a generally rectangular site with an eastern portion occupied by the new Chinese Evangelical Church. Another portion of the site is occupied by a large building used commercially and by the Boys' Club. The remainder of the land is open space. The sites, however, are divided by the elevated Orange Line which is expected to be taken down in 3 to 5 years. The site is surrounded by the Mass Pike to the south, the Quincy Community Complex to the west, Don Bosco Technical School, a parking lot and private homes on Johnny Court to the north, and finally Tai Tung Village to the east.

This site is accessible to community services (Quincy Community Complex), neighborhood shopping and restaurants. It is four blocks from the Essex MBTA and within easy walking distance to central Chinatown. The traffic level is moderate.

SUITABILITY

Although the combined sites of R3-R3A is a sizable parcel, it will only be appropriate for development after the elevated Orange Line tracks are taken down. In addition, the Boys' Club, a community organization, presently occupies one portion of this site. Furthermore, the Chinatown YMCA has planned to relocate on this site. Several options are available to them--the YMCA may relocate to this site or relocate elsewhere (such as the UR 32C site in the South End), leaving R3-R3A for housing. Another option is for joint use of the site for housing and for the YMCA. If the YMCA does in fact relocate to R3-R3A, the YMCA's present site Parcel R1 will be available for housing.



SITE #4: PARCEL R1

STREET BOUNDARIES: Hudson, Harvard, Tyler, Kneeland

SIZE: 19,335 square feet

OWNERS: Boston Redevelopment Authority; First Christ Church

TYPE OF HOUSING PROPOSED: Family--2, 3, 4 bedroom

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This rectangular site is presently occupied by the South Cove YMCA's office and playground (yellow bubble), several townhouses, a parking lot, and a garment warehouse on the Kneeland Street site. It is across from the T-NEMC Medical and Dental Building on Tyler, and across from the Mass Pike on Hudson. Beach Street is a block away and the Essex MBTA station is a short walk from there. The Quincy Community Complex is six blocks away, south on Tyler and west on Oak Street.

SUITABILITY

The noise and traffic from the Mass Pike may make this site less desirable for housing. Any housing development which would be built would face Tyler Street to reduce congestion and noise, and for easy access to shopping, transportation and community facilities. The YMCA has plans to relocate to Parcel R3-R3A which is also a potential site for family housing. This would make Parcel R1 a suitable site for development although the First Christ Church rejected a housing proposal in the past. If Parcel R3-R3A is used for housing the YMCA may want to stay on this site or move to the UR 32C site in the South End.



SITE #5: HARVARD - KNEELAND

STREET BOUNDARIES: Harvard, Kneeland, Harrison

SIZE: 9,000 square feet (estimated)

OWNER: St. James Church, Robert and Elizabeth Rodday

TYPE OF HOUSING PROPOSED: Family--2, 3, 4 bedroom

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

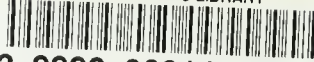
This is a rectangular site on the same block as St. James Church. The site currently contains the church's rectory, several townhouses, and a parking lot. It is opposite the Tufts Rehabilitation Building on Harvard and across Tufts' Medical and Dental Library on Harrison. It is also diagonally across from the Posner Hall-Parking Lot Site #1.

The site is convenient to community facilities such as the Quincy Community Complex, the South Cove Community Health Center and the YMCA. It is only a block from Beach Street--close to the garment industries, restaurants and grocery stores in central Chinatown. The Essex MBTA station is only three blocks away.

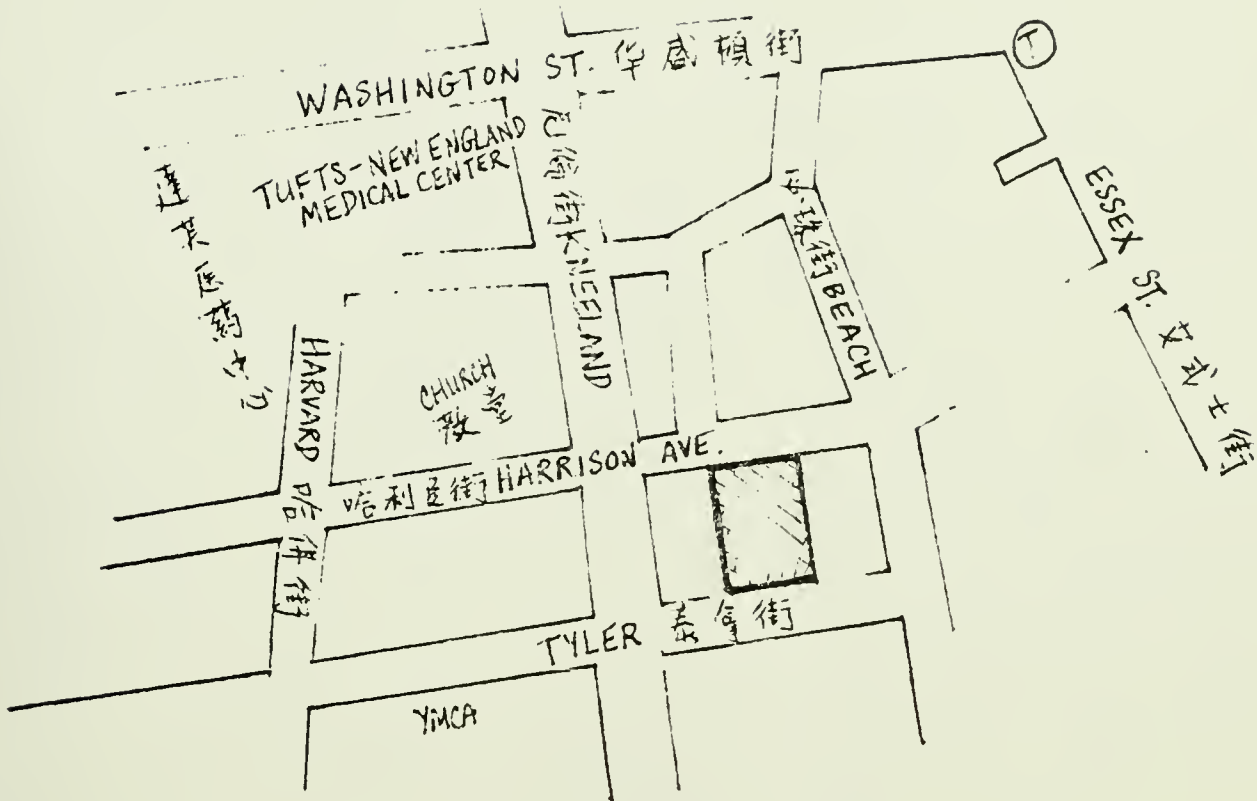
SUITABILITY

This site is well suited for housing as it is away from the more congested areas of Chinatown, yet still close to community services. Any housing built on the site would complement the existing housing, which Tufts-New England Medical Center has entered into an agreement to acquire (28 Harvard and 135-137 Harrison). The rectory is a potential building for rehabilitation if it is no longer used for religious purposes.

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SITE #6: HARRISON - TYLER

STREET BOUNDARIES: Harrison, Beach, Tyler, Kneeland

SIZE: 11,250 square feet

OWNER: private owner

TYPE OF HOUSING PROPOSED: Family--2, 3, 4 bedroom

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This site is presently a rectangular parking lot lying between some warehouses, stores and restaurants. It is in the center of Chinatown's commercial area, so that shopping, restaurants and the garment industries are very convenient. The Quincy Community complex and the YMCA are a little farther away than the other sites, although the Chinese-American Civic Association is closer. The site is close to Beach Street and the Essex MBTA station.

SUITABILITY

This site is the largest piece of land remaining in the heart of Chinatown. While access to shopping and transportation are advantages, the heavy noise, traffic and congestion during the day do not make this site ideally suitable for family housing.

